

Bladder Cancer

Bladder cancer is the third most common cancer in men. Sheffield has the highest incidence rate of bladder cancer in the Trent Region. Registration rates increase with age and are four times as high at 80 as they are at 60. Occupational bladder cancers occur on average 15 years earlier than similar tumours in the general population. (Lilis and Landrigan)

Some cases of urothelial (bladder) cancer, perhaps 15% of the total, are likely to have an occupational cause. Because of the long latency of up to 40 years or more the main value of case-finding is to advise patients of their possible entitlement to state Disablement Benefit.

However identification of hitherto unidentified causes of bladder cancer continues and could be an additional benefit. A recent follow up of workers at the Vinatex plant in North Derbyshire has uncovered a cluster of cases of bladder cancer which have not yet been attributed to known causes of the disease.

Known causes of bladder cancer

The principal chemicals established as causes of bladder cancer are dyes containing the benzidine structure (dye manufacture and use), beta naphthylamine (rubber manufacture, also as a trace in mineral oils and gas works residues), tar and soot, and MBOCA (used in the plastics industry). Cigarette smoking also increases risk of contracting bladder cancer. A number of drugs are known to cause bladder cancer; phenacetin, and cyclophosphamide being those most commonly used.

A summary of thinking on bladder cancer is contained in Occupational Bladder Cancer: A guide for clinicians, *British Journal of Urology* (1988) 61: 183-191, and in

A number of other jobs carry an increased risk of bladder cancer, though the cause is not known in all cases. Patients with past history in engineering and driving jobs should be asked about their contact with chemicals, as these occupations have increased mortality from bladder cancer in many epidemiological studies. Leather work, boot and shoe manufacture and repair, hairdressing, printing jobs, plastics, work in coking plants, rodent extermination, sewage works, laboratory work and aluminium refining also do. Coke and gas production was closely associated with several steelworks in the Sheffield area until the early 1960s.

Disablement benefit

Bladder cancer (including papilloma, carcinoma-in-situ, and invasive carcinoma) is a prescribed disease (C23) where workers have had exposure to the chemicals listed above. In practice close questioning is sometimes required to establish whether this is the case. Entitlement to disablement benefit requires a qualifying level of disablement (14%).

→ A step-by-step procedure for potential claimants is printed overleaf.

Prevention

A number of known causes of bladder cancer are banned, including ortho-toluidine. There is no safe level of exposure to carcinogens and it is evident that very low concentrations of these chemicals mentioned are sufficient to cause bladder cancer. The Approved Code of Practice on Carcinogens applies to them.

Lilis R, Landrigan PJ, *Renal and Urinary Tract Disorders*, in Levy BS, Wegman DH, *Occupational Health: Recognising and Preventing Work-related Disorders*, Little, Brown and Co. 3rd edn, 1995, pp 591 -661

This bulletin is produced by Sheffield Occupational Health Project. We aim to provide advice tailored to the needs of clinical workers primary care in the Sheffield area. In addition we will feature in each issue the work of a local specialist or group with a particular area of interest in occupational health.

For more information on any item contact SOHAS at the address below

An occasional publication, free to workers in primary care in the Sheffield area

Occupational Health update

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If you think your bladder cancer could have been caused by your work

- ❑ Apply to the DSS - either by visiting your local Benefits Agency or by telephoning and asking for leaflet NI 2 ('If You Have An Industrial Disease') and claim form BI 100.
- ❑ A DSS Adjudicating Officer - not your employer or former employer - decides if your claim satisfies the rules relating to the claim.
- ❑ You will be asked to attend a medical if you are too ill to travel the DSS can arrange for a home visit. The medical is to confirm whether or not your bladder cancer is related to work
- ❑ If your bladder cancer is accepted as work-related, and you meet all the rules relating to your occupation (past or present)_ you will be assessed to determine the degree of loss of faculty/disablement
- ❑ If you are assessed at being at least 14% disabled, you will receive either a provisional assessment which reviewed after a period of time, or a final assessment for a fixed period or for life
- ❑ You will receive a weekly pension which can be paid by order book or into a bank or building society account
- ❑ If you wish to appeal against a decision it may be because the Benefits Agency doctors do not accept that your bladder cancer has been caused by work, or you believe the level of disability has been assessed too low, then contact the Benefits Enquiry line again and request they send you form NI 246 - How to appeal - and seek further advice from your union or Sheffield Occupational Health Project

Making a claim for benefit can be complex. Don't be put off. Read the notes, and ask a friend, union rep or an occupational health adviser from SOHP for help if you have problems. An alternative is to phone the DSS Benefits Enquiry line (0800 882200) which is staffed by people who will help you fill in the claim form and explain to you the procedures for completing the claim and if necessary, how to appeal. If you need help with an appeal or review contact SOHP.

(reproduced with amendments, courtesy of Birmingham Health and Safety Advice Centre)